The Whistler

Newsletter of the Ringwood Field Naturalists Club Inc.

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From the Editor

It's hard to believe that it's October already and time for another edition of The Whistler! The last 6 months have been prosperous for the Club, with an array of speakers and events over the winter period. Spring is doing its best to warm up, with birds singing and nesting, and flowers appearing in bushland and nature reserves.

We've had two marine themed speakers, educating us on the southern reef and rhodolith beds, then a talk on the plants of the high country. We also had a 'show and tell' night which we do every couple of years, and it was wonderful to see all the different objects members brought along to share. Shirley gave her President's Address on the Ten reasons she loves the RFNC. Have a look at page 11 for a rundown of that presentation.

Congratulations to David Hewitt who was awarded a Life Membership at the AGM in September!

Excursions were varied and covered some old favourites like the Yea Wetlands, Sherbrooke, Sugarloaf Reservoir, Yarran Dheran and Boomers Reserve. We also visited the Euroa Arboretum, which was a first for the Club, and most members. It was well worth the drive to see the arboretum on a wonderful spring day.

Coming up in a few weeks we're hosting the SEANA weekend away in Marysville, in place of our own spring weekend away. Many members are attending which is great to see, and if it's your first SEANA weekend I'm sure you'll enjoy it.

Jack Airey
Editor

"What are you looking at?"- a Barking Owl was a surprising find on our May excursion to the Yea Wetlands. What a treat!
Photo – Eleanor Dilley

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Member News

Welcome to our new members - Clancy Benson, Russell Pryor, Andrea Lenard and Craig Wood.

President's Report

It has been a pleasure to have been the President of this group for the last 12 months. I think it has been another very successful year in terms of quality of our meetings, excursions and weekends away.

We have continued to have good attendance at all our activities and several new members have joined the Club this year. A warm welcome to those new members.

There has been a good variety of speakers during the year, and we have had two weekends away at Castlemaine and Traralgon. Some members attended SEANA Weekends away at Yarram in October 2023 and Phillip Island in April 2024.

Our excursions have been varied and interesting. I am pleased to see some new excursions and to places that the group hasn't visited for many years.

There are many people who need to be thanked for their contribution to the functioning of this club. Firstly, a big thank you to those members who have organised and led excursions and weekends away. Thanks to Jack, Hazel and Alan, Lynn and Neal, Inta and Roger, Graeme and Helen, David and Eeva and Liz for organizing the excursions and to Roger and Inta and Jenny and David Williams for organizing the weekends away. Secondly, a big thank you to those members who have been speakers during the year or participated in the member nights of Show and Tell and Wandering with Nature in Australia, so thanks to Hazel and Alan, Barbara, Peter and Adele for their interesting presentations.

It is a great Committee to work with. A very big thank you needs to be given to Eleanor Dilley who has been the Secretary of the Group for 10 years and is not standing for re-election. She will be a hard act to follow. It has been great to have such an efficient and reliable person in that role. Ray Wall is a very industrious Treasurer and the upcoming SEANA weekend has added extra responsibility for Ray this year. Alison Rogers is a magician given how she brings together each of our half-yearly programs. Jack does a wonderful job with the Whistler and the Website and the speaker system. David makes sure the computer and projector is working well at every meeting. Peter is an excellent email communicator between the Committee and the membership. All our Committee meetings are held at the Veevers' home. Thank you, Hazel and Alan, for hosting those meetings. As well we have held all our Committee planning meetings for the October SEANA weekend at the Veevers'. As Vice-President Hazel took on the role of Convenor for the Marysville weekend and the organisation of that weekend is progressing well. Thank you, Hazel. Thank you to everyone on the Committee for their contribution to the Club.

Shirley Smith
President 2023-24

Life Membership Award – David Hewitt

Wednesday 11th September 2024

Honorary Life Membership is awarded to someone who, for a long period of time, has provided outstanding service to both the Club and towards furthering the Club's aims.

Our recipient certainly lives up to this by providing a commitment for years. I am talking about David Hewitt who has been a member for 22 years having joined the Club in 2003.

David has provided contributions to the Club including as the main meeting speaker on several occasion, providing mini talks on member's nights, leading Club excursions and organising two Club weekends away. David has become the Club expert on moths and anything relating to entomology.

In addition, he provided a lot of assistance in organising and running a highly successful SEANA weekends in 2017. In particular, David (along with Eeva) organised and conducted full day outings to the Kiata area on both the Saturday and Sunday.

But his major contribution has been a commitment to the operations of the Club. He joined the Committee in 2010 and has been a valued Committee member for the past 14 years. In this time, he has:

- Undertaken the duties of projectionist for the last 20 years,
- Maintained the working capabilities of the laptop and projector,
- Provided helpful insight regarding any new equipment purchases.

David continues to provide ongoing service to the Club, so the Committee have no hesitation in awarding him an Honorary Life Membership.

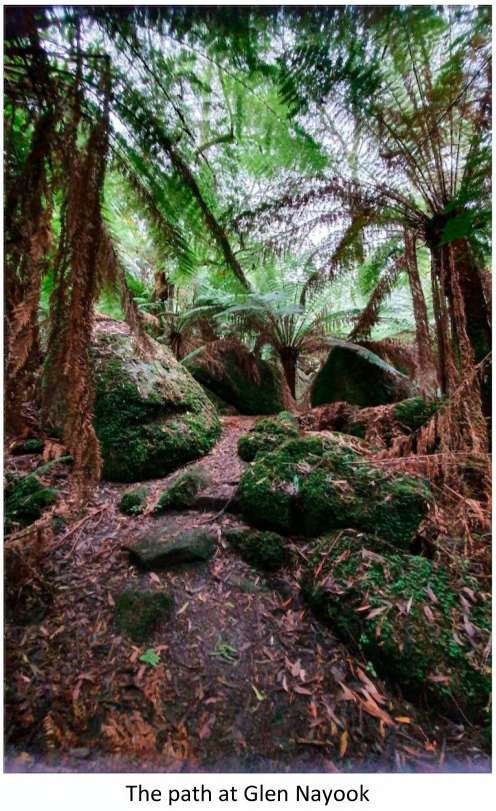
Shirley Smith
President

Out and About

Noojee

Saturday 13th April 2024
Leader: Inta & Roger Needham

Twenty-seven members assembled in the car park of Glen Nayook Reserve at the end of Paynter Road at 9.30am on Saturday 13th April 2024. The group walked 600 metres along the track which led down to the gully of the Little Tarago River to view the lush assemblage of ferns found there.



The path at Glen Nayook

Near the beginning of the track, those close to the front caught a brief glimpse of a Lyrebird which moved uphill under cover of the surrounding vegetation and out of sight.

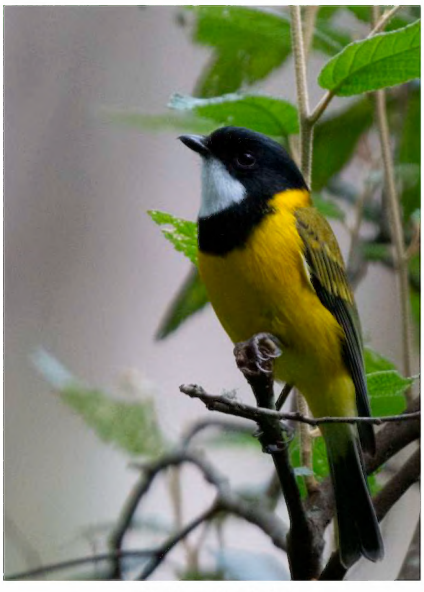
The environment in the area is extremely beautiful with an overstorey of tall eucalypts (Mountain Ash) with a dense understorey of Pomaderis, Acacias and ferns. Large granite boulders are exposed in the gully and they are festooned with lichens, mosses and ferns. The whole environment was moist and cool at the time of our visit.

Some members, keen on ferns, searched the gully trying to find species which had been found in the area in past visits. Other members spent less time there and climbed the tall, steep and slippery steps back to the car park where they had morning tea, heard and saw a few birds and had plenty of conversations.

At 11am we left the car park and drove to our lunch spot at Noojee just over the bridge on the Loch River Road. The environment here is also very attractive amongst very large, tall eucalypts and deciduous trees beside the swiftly flowing La Trobe River. Kookaburras, Spinebills, Wattlebirds and Pied Currawongs were all seen.

Noojee lunch spot & the path at Toorongo Falls (R)

After an earlyish lunch we drove the 10 km east to Toorongo Falls. We were surprised by the number of cars in the very large car park. It was almost full and we had a time finding parking spots ourselves. All members took the track through the tall trees and ferns of a lush temperate rainforest to the lookout over the Toorongo Falls. Myrtle Beech trees with their distinctive small oval serrated leaves and tall smooth tree ferns were to be seen in the area. Golden Whistlers and Grey Shrike-thrushes were spied by some of our group. Some members walked out to the Amphitheatre Falls while others took the direct track back to the car park.



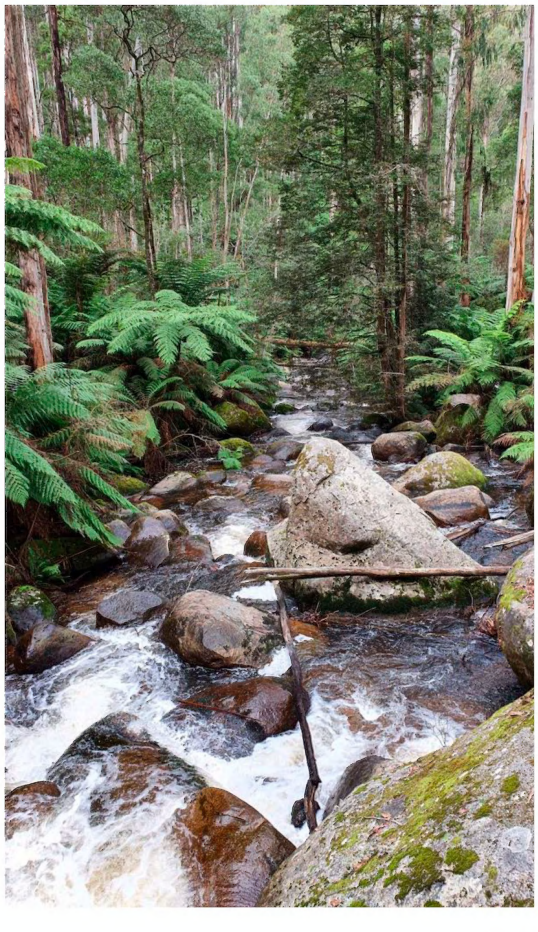
Golden Whistler

Grey Shrike-thrush

Our schedule for the day had been completed early and while some people decided to return home, others travelled back to Noojee and enjoyed afternoon tea adjacent to the historic railway station with its steam locomotives on display.

Many in our group had not visited some of the sites before and enjoyed exploring these areas new to them. Those who had been to these places before, appreciated the opportunity to re-acquaint themselves with this very beautiful part of our State.

By Roger and Inta Needham

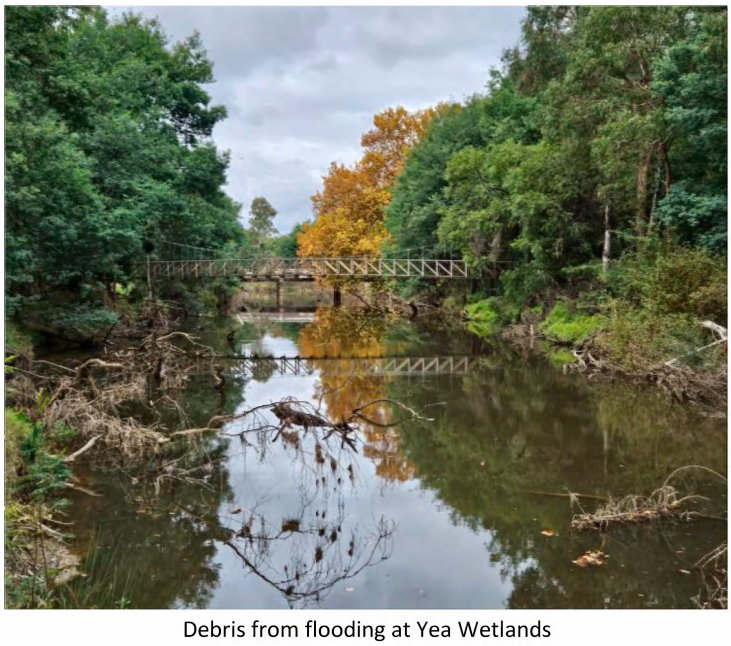


Toorongo Falls

Yea Wetlands & Cheviot Tunnel

Sunday 5th May
Leader: Jack Airey

25 members met at the Yea Wetlands John Cummins Reserve for our May excursion. The wetlands are just over an hour north of Melbourne on the outskirts of Yea. The wetlands sit between the Yea River and its anabranch, creating a floodplain between the two, providing a great bushland habitat.



Debris from flooding at Yea Wetlands

We were greeted by picture perfect weather with the wetlands looking green and vibrant, and the billabongs containing good levels of water. The wetlands had been inundated in several recent floods, the last one in January. Some of the boardwalks had sustained damage, but there was only a minor section of the paths that was closed, and we easily skirted around that section.

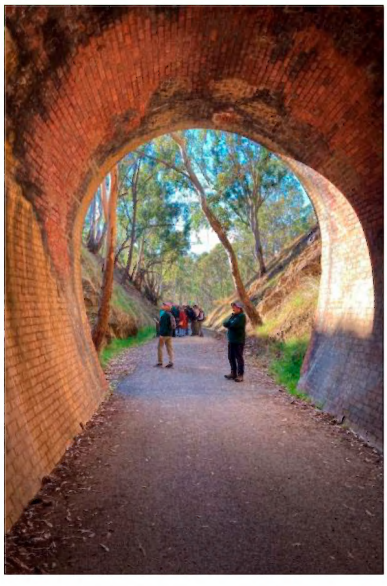
After gathering in the carpark for a briefing, we headed off along the trail. Birds were quite active, and we noticed many "little brown jobs" including Spotted and Striated Pardalotes, White-browed Scrubwrens, Brown Thornbills and Grey Fantails. After rounding one of the bends along the path, Alan exclaimed about noticing some possible owl pellets on the ground. Looking up, we were excited to discover an owl looking down on the group. It turned out to be a puzzling owl, as some felt it was a large Boobook while others thought it was a small Powerful Owl. After much discussion and the consulting of field guides, we were amazed to realise that it was in fact a Barking Owl – one of the rarest owls in Victoria - critically endangered with an estimated only 50 pairs left in the state!

Moving on, we navigated most of the trails across the reserve, without finding any more owls, however we saw good numbers of other bush birds such as Superb Fairy-wrens, Eastern Yellow Robins and Red-browed Finches. As it turned out, the billabongs themselves didn't have much by way of birdlife, save for a few ducks here and there and a Darter enjoying the sunshine. We managed just under 40 bird species.

Pellet from the Barking Owl

Australasian Darter (ED)

After lunch, we drove to Cheviot Tunnel which is our traditional afternoon walk when we come this way. A few members of the group hadn't been to the tunnel before and enjoyed walking through it, then returning to the carpark via the overland route. We added a few more birds to the list here including Red-rumped Parrots, an Australian Kestrel and a pair of Flame Robins on a wire fence, taking our total for the day to 44 species.



Cheviot Tunnel (ED)

It was an enjoyable excursion with lovely weather and good birding, the absolute stand-out being the Barking Owl at the wetlands. How lucky we were to see it. According to online reports, it seems the owl was only recorded there for one to two weeks. Thankfully our excursion was at the right place at the right time.

By Jack Airey (Additional photos by Eleanor Dilley)

Heading back to the carpark via the overland route at Cheviot Tunnel

RFNC Planting Day – Sunday 19th May 2024

This year 15 members, plus Derek from Maroondah Council, planted 740 young native plants at a small Reserve on Mersey Street, Ringwood North. Many thanks to all our volunteers for their help.

By Hazel and Alan Veevers

How many plants?
This many – all the plant tubes at the end of the morning

Sherbrooke Forest

Saturday 15th June 2024
Leader: Hazel & Alan Veevers

Twenty-four members met at Grant's Picnic Ground in Sherbrooke Forest, all hoping to see Lyrebirds. The weather was fine and the tracks were in good condition for walkers.

Male Lyrebird

We set out on the Hardy Gully Track, enjoying everything from fungi, tree terns and huge specimens of Mountain Ash. This Cool Temperate Rainforest environment is ideal for Lyrebirds. We heard male birds calling as we walked down Lyrebird Track, but didn't see any until we later reached a high point on Neumann Track. A male was spotted feeding on the track-side, and everyone had the opportunity to watch it until it decided to wander off into the forest. Other Lyrebird sightings were had as we retraced our steps in this wonderful place.

A total of 18 bird species were recorded for the morning.

By Hazel & Alan Veevers

Sugarloaf Reservoir

Saturday 13th July 2024
Leaders: Helen & Graeme Fernandez

Twenty-two members & one visitor met at Saddle Dam picnic area on a cloudy, cool 13-degree day. From the carpark we set off on the Chris Phillips walking track to the lower slopes of Mt Graham.

Because there had been very little rain until now, there was very little lower storey and undergrowth on the edges of the Reservoir. Once we reached the base of Mt Graham with an easterly aspect, more plentiful lower vegetation with some mosses and fungi were growing in the cooler and damper conditions amongst the Tea Tree. With a mixture of lower storey and tall eucalypts in the area it was a hot spot for observing birds. Some of the more interesting birds were Scarlet Robin, Spotted Pardalote, Brown-headed Honeyeater and a Golden Whistler.

Returning along the road cutting we observed the layers of coloured sandstone. After lunch at the Ridge Picnic area, we drove a short distance on the Ridge Road to a small, but interesting damper area with more mosses and undergrowth and three small dams. Two held water, one had waterlilies with Eastern Froglet calling and the other one had many tadpoles which were observed very closely by some members. Graham T was lucky enough to spot a Brown quail here.

During the day some items of interest were: 36 birds were spotted, 2 Mistletoe: Grey-Amyema quandang & Dropping-Amyema pendulum, Grey kangaroos and a Wallaby. This concluded a very enjoyable day.

By Graeme Fernandez

Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve

Sunday 18th August 2024
Leaders: Eeva & David Hewitt

Yarran Dheran is one of last areas of dry schlerophyll forest in urban Melbourne and it was fortunately saved from destruction when the Eastlink tunnels were constructed. The reserve has in the past served the Wurundjeri people and was used as a quarry until 1955, and then a tip until 1963. It was declared as a nature reserve in 1963 and since then over 40,000 trees and shrubs have been planted.

On a pleasantly warm spring morning, 20 Members and 1 visitor met at Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve for a leisurely morning walk through part of the reserve and across the river to the Mullum Mullum Creek Reserve. An abundance of early spring flowers was present, and we were able to identify at least thirteen different wattles as well as many hovea and hardenbergia plants and quite a few tall greenhoods. With the assistance of Graeme Fernandes, we were also able to spot 24 different birds.

By Eeva & David Hewitt

Rainbow Lorikeet

Mullum Mullum Creek

Acacia myrtifolia

Acacia verticillata

Acacia pubescens

Pterostylis nutans

Hardenbergia violacea

Hovea Heterophylla

Acacia acinacea

Hakea

Euroa

Saturday 7th September 2024
Leaders: Liz Triggs & Shirley Smith

A wetland in the arboretum

The sun shone for the first time in a couple of weeks and 21 members travelled to Euroa for the first Spring excursion. The group has not visited the Arboretum before. This 27-hectare site was originally a sheep farm and then a road depot before being handed over to the local community by VicRoads in 1990. A Committee of Management and a dedicated group of volunteers has transformed the site into an impressive woodland and wetland environment. Some of us were disappointed that the excellent plant nursery wasn't open that day.

The group spent a couple of hours on some of the main paths before lunch. There were lots of *acacia* in flower as well as a good assortment of other natives. There were 36 birds recorded. Thanks to Graeme Fernandez for compiling the bird list and Alison Rogers and Liz Triggs for doing the plant list.

After lunch the group split in several different ways: some went into the Euroa township and completed part of the Seven Creeks Reserve Walk, some did a different walk around the Arboretum and some drove back to Melbourne via Shepparton, the Seymour Bushland Reserve and Yea Wetlands. People seemed to appreciate being able to choose their afternoon activity.

By Liz Triggs & Shirley Smith

Acacia pravissima

Dilwinnea cinerescens

Diamond Firetails

Member's Articles

President's Address - Ten reasons why I love Ringwood Field Naturalists Club

I have been a member of the Club since 2012 and I have often reflected on why I continue to thoroughly enjoy my membership. When trying to come up with a topic for the President's Address at the AGM, I chose "Ten Reasons Why I love Ringwood Field Naturalists Club". Then of course, I had to come up with 10 reasons, but that was easy. The Ten reasons I covered in my presentation were:

1. The people in the group
2. The collective knowledge, variety of interests and the enthusiasm of the membership
3. The monthly meeting agenda
4. Members slides/images at monthly meetings
5. Excursions
6. The weekends away
7. The long and valued history of the Club
8. The wonderful committee
9. Some special people in the group
10. Group participation

I always enjoy how we proudly wear our green jackets, love sitting around in a circle when having lunch together on excursions and the enthusiasm when seeing a new bird or a different flower on an excursion. There is an amazing amount of knowledge in the group that is generously shared and discussed at every opportunity. The monthly meetings are a unique blend of formality and flexibility. Information is shared and a number of opportunities are given at every meeting for all members to participate via sharing news of members, or reports of interesting sightings or listening to a speaker and hearing the report on the latest excursion or weekend away.

I did an overview of the excursions for the last 12 month and reflected on the variety of places we have been, the number of members who volunteer to lead those excursions and the number of members who come along. In the past year we have had between 21 and 26 members to every excursion. How good is that!!

The weekends away were even more popular with 28 at the Castlemaine Camp in Spring 2023 and 25 attendees at the Traralgon Camp in Autumn 2024. I showed some images of the early excursions and camps that I had attended with Ron. How young we all looked in 2014.

The long and valued history of the Club is revealed through good record keeping, the celebration of significant events and the valuing of Life Membership.

Group participation is highlighted by the good number of members who lead excursions and camp, give presentations to the group, share images at meetings, help set and pack up the meeting room month after month and join the Committee and do all the tasks associated with running the meetings and activities.

What a wonderful group to be part of in 2024.

By Shirley Smith

Appendix

Glen Nayook, Noojee & Toorongo Falls bird list – 23 species
Compiled by Jack Airey

Australian Wood Duck	White-throated Treecreeper	Golden Whistler
Little Pied Cormorant	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australian Hobby	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Fantail
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo	White-browed Scrubwren	Grey Butcherbird
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Brown Thornbill	Australian Magpie
Crimson Rosella	Lewin's Honeyeater	Pied Currawong
Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Spinebill	Little Raven
Superb Lyrebird	Eastern Yellow Robin	

Yea Wetlands and Cheviot Tunnel bird list – 44 species
Compiled by Jack Airey

Australian Wood Duck	Red-rumped Parrot	Eastern Spinebill
Pacific Black Duck	Barking Owl	Flame Robin
Australasian Grebe	Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Yellow Robin
Darter	White-throated Treecreeper	Golden Whistler
Little Pied Cormorant	Superb Fairy-wren	Grey Shrike-thrush
White-faced Heron	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Fantail
Straw-necked Ibis	Striated Pardalote	Willie Wagtail
Whistling Kite	White-browed Scrubwren	Magpie Lark
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Brown Thornbill	Australian Magpie
Australian Kestrel	Red Wattlebird	Pied Currawong
Dusky Moorhen	Bell Miner	Australian Raven
Little Corella	Noisy Miner	Red-browed Finch
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Welcome Swallow
Rainbow Lorikeet	White-plumed Honeyeater	Silvereye
Crimson Rosella	White-naped Honeyeater	

Sherbrooke Forest bird list – 18 species
Compiled by Graeme Fernandez

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Little Raven
Grey Fantail	Eastern Spinebill
Laughing Kookaburra	Superb Lyrebird
Straw-necked Ibis	Brown Thornbill
Australian Magpie	Crimson Rosella
Grey Shrike-thrush	Welcome Swallow
Australian King Parrot	Eastern Yellow Robin
Pied Currawong	Golden Whistler
Galah	Superb Fairy-wren

Sugarloaf Reservoir bird list – 36 species
Compiled by Graeme Fernandez

Brown Quail	Superb Fairy-wren	Golden Whistler
Australian Wood Duck	Spotted Pardalote	Grey Shrike-thrush
Australian Shelduck	Striated Thornbill	Grey Fantail
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Brown Thornbill	Grey Butcherbird
Masked Lapwing	Red Wattlebird	Australian Magpie
Gang-gang Cockatoo	Noisy Miner	Pied Currawong
Long-billed Corella	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Australian Raven
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	White-eared Honeyeater	Little Raven
Galah	New Holland Honeyeater	White-winged Chough
Crimson Rosella	Brown-headed Honeyeater	Red-browed Finch
Laughing Kookaburra	Eastern Spinebill	Welcome Swallow
White-throated Treecreeper	Scarlet Robin	Silvereye

Yarran Dheran wattle list (in flower) – 13 species
Compiled by David Hewitt

Acacia pycnantha	*Acacia dealbata*	*Acacia myrtifolia*
Acacia verticillata	*Acacia melanoxylon*	*Acacia acinacea*
Acacia paradoxa	*Acacia pubescens*	*Acacia aculetissima*
Acacia rigens	*Acacia irrorata*	*Acacia floribunda*
Acacia genistifolia		

Yarran Dheran bird list – 24 species
Compiled by Graeme Fernandez

Pacific Black Duck	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Spotted Pardalote
Australian White Ibis	Australian King Parrot	Brown Thornbill
Dusky Moorhen	Crimson Rosella	Australian Magpie
Rock Dove	Rainbow Lorikeet	Pied Currawong
Spotted Dove	Superb Fairywren	Grey Fantail
Common Bronzewing	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Little Raven
Laughing Kookaburra	Noisy Miner	Silvereye
Galah	Red Wattlebird	Common Myna

Some of our members attending the SEANA weekend at Phillip Island

Euroa Arboretum bird list – 36 species
Compiled by Graeme Fernandez

Mistletoebird	Superb Fairy-wren	White Plumed Honeyeater
Striated Pardalote	Willie Wagtail	Laughing Kookaburra
Dusky Moorhen	Australian Magpie	Magpie Lark
Litle Eagle	Weebill	Australasian Darter
Black faced Cuckoo-shrike	White-faced Heron	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
Australian Raven	Little Raven	Galah
Whistling Kite	Noisy Miner	Diamond Firetail
Straw-necked Ibis	Australian White Ibis	Black Duck
Crested pigeon	Yellow Thornbill	Masked Lapwing
Spotted Pardalote	Australian Reed Warbler	Welcome Swallow
Red Wattlebird	Grey Butcherbird	Grey Fantail
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Eastern Rosella	Blue-faced Honeyeater

Euroa Arboretum plant list
Compiled by Alison Rogers and Liz Triggs

Acacia acinacea	*Eucalyptus blakelyi*
Acacia aculeatissima	*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*
Acacia dealbata	
Acacia genistifolia	*Grevillea alpina* (red form and yellow form)
Acacia montana	*Hardenbergia violacea*
Acacia pravissima	*Hibbertia sp*
Acacia verniciflua	*Indigofera australis*
Acacia paradoxa	*Kennedia prostrata*
Acacia pycnantha	*Leucochrysum albicans*
Acacia strictophylla	*Microseris lanceolata*
	Ozothamnus obcordatus
Allocasuarina verticillata	*Philotheca myoporoides,*
Amyema miquellii	*Poa labillardierei*
Bursaria spinosa	*Pultenaea humilis*
Cassinia arcuata	*Senna artemisioides*
Callitris glaucophylla	*Stypandra glauca*
Chrysocephalum apiculatum	*Typha latifolia*
Chrysocephalum semipapposum	*Xerochrysum viscosum*
Dianella revoluta	
Dillwynia cinerescens	*Pittosporum angustifolium ??*
Dillwynia juniperina	
Dodonaea viscosa var angustissima	